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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

COMMENT

THE CHRISTMAS CLOCK

THE recurrent holiday season, chiming like a clock above the voices of the world's unrest, may well remind us of laws more ancient than the race, of rhythms which reach beyond our little planet. Even now, in this epoch of upheaval, when the world is bubbling down into a new shape after its mighty brew, even now we keep step in the procession of life, and move on eternal and immutable tides. Disorder, so visible and audible, is merely a surface phenomenon of sputter and spatter, of foam and roar; from an airplane nearer than a summer cloud we should see it for part of the pattern, for the burden of one of time's waves, to be cast up at last on that shore at the sky-line as ruthlessly as the most violent generation of the past.

To consider the beauty of order is almost to adventure upon platitudes, yet even that risk may be accepted when the clock strikes through the noise. The movement of days, of seasons, of years, the super-rhythms of sun and stars—to feel these is to hear the fundamental chord on which the music of life is based. And the endless procession of life, beating its slighter tunes in time to those rhythms, varying its measures from the march to the dance, rounding the circle from fluttering infancy to trembling age—this is a beauty more poignant than love or death, the immense beauty which embraces love and death.

The Christmas Clock

"Why don't we write about it—the most poetic thing in the world?" said a poet the other day—a poet still young, but past youth's first dazzle and blare. "The baby emerging like a tiny spark in the dark; the child dancing with its little candle; youth waving its torch, blinded by its own light as it runs; men and women loving and laboring, fighting and sorrowing, bearing the new race, passing on the glory, the terror; then the autumn time of richest color, of deepest splendor flaring before it fades; and finally the soft whiteness of age, shimmering, obliterating: with death always tempting life, always poisoning its dart, uttering its cry; and life always beginning again in inexhaustible hope. Why aren't we always shouting it, singing it, making people feel what they so often forget—the eternal magnificent rhythm of it?"

Indeed, this message has been, from the beginning, the underlying meaning of art. What other reminder than art do the generations leave as they pass—what other reminder of the beauty of life, its majestic rhythms and harmonies? But for the arts, resounding and enduring, this earth would possess no records of its past; each generation would wither like this autumn's leaves, to be trodden out by the next, and forgotten as the beast forgets. The arts alone can tell the tale of the tribe—in carved or masonried stone, in color, in song. The arts alone assert immortality in beauty, and say nay to obliterating death. They alone give mankind its memories.

H. M.